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MACAULAY'S USE OF SCRIPTURE IN HIS ESSAYS.¹

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II. ALLUSIONS TO THE PERSONS OF SCRIPTURE.

[*On Walpole.*] "The literature of France has been to ours what Aaron was to Moses, the expositor of great truths which would else have perished for want of a voice to utter them with distinctness."²

[*On Bacon.*] "Cowley has in one of his finest poems compared Bacon to Moses standing on Mount Pisgah. It is to Bacon, we think, as he appears in the first book of the *Novum Organum*, that the comparison applies with peculiar felicity. There we see the great Lawgiver looking round from his lonely elevation on an infinite expanse; behind him a wilderness of dreary sands and bitter waters, in which successive generations have sojourned, always moving yet never advancing, reaping no harvest, and building no abiding city; before him a goodly land, a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey. While the multitude below saw only the flat, sterile desert in which they had so long wandered, bounded on every side by a near horizon, or diversified only by some deceitful mirage, he was gazing from a higher stand upon a far lovelier country, following, with his eye, the long course of fertilizing rivers, through ample pastures, and under the bridges of great capitals, measuring the distances of marts and havens, and portioning out all those wealthy regions from Dan to Beersheba."³

[*On Bacon.*] "Had his (Bacon's) civil ends continued to be moderate, he would have been not only the Moses, but the Joshua of philosophy. He would have fulfilled a large part of his own magnificent predictions. He would have led his followers not only to the verge, but into the heart of the promised land. He would not merely have pointed out, he would have divided the spoil."⁴

[*On Byron.*] "Cowper and Alfieri rendered a great service to literature." "Sick of the languid manner of their contemporaries," the "example they set of mutiny against an absurd system was invaluable. The part which they performed was rather that of Moses than that of Joshua. They opened the house of bondage; they did not enter the promised land."⁵

[*Mirabeau.*] "Boswell, a literary Gibeonite."⁶

[*Mackintosh.*] "It had never occurred to him (King James) as possible that a reverend divine might begin to discover much matter for useful meditation in the texts touching Ehud's knife and Jael's hammer."⁷

[*On Walpole.*] "The victims of popular rage are selected like the victim of Jephthah. The first person who comes in the way is made the sacrifice."⁸

[*Conversation between Milton and Cowley.*] Milton speaks, giving his opinion of the condition to which the nation was reduced in the times succeeding the

¹ Continued from the March number.

⁴ Joshua.

⁵ Deut. 34:1.

⁶ Josh. 9:23.

² Ex. 4:16.

⁷ Judg. 3:21; 4:21.

⁸ Deut. 34:1

⁸ Judg. 12:34-42.

Restoration: "England is sleeping on the lap of Delilah, traitorously chained, but not yet shorn of strength. Let that cry be once heard—the Philistines be upon thee; and at once that sleep will be broken; and those chains will be as flax in the fire."¹

[*Temple.*] For the comparison between Ahithophel and Shaftesbury, which appears in this essay and in the one on "History," Macaulay acknowledges his indebtedness to Dryden, but its use by the Essayist gives it additional force and lustre. It makes Shaftesbury's character vivid to the dullest mind. "The counsel of Ahithophel (Shaftesbury), that counsel which was as if a man had inquired of the oracle of God, was turned into foolishness."²

[*On Hallam.*] "He (Cromwell) went down to his grave in the fulness of power and fame; and he left to his son an authority which any man of ordinary firmness and prudence would have retained. But for the weakness of that foolish Ishbosheth," etc., etc.³

[*Warren Hastings.*] "Doest thou well to be angry?" was the question asked in old time of the Hebrew prophet. And he answered, "I do well." This was evidently the temper of Junius, and to this cause we attribute much of the savage cruelty which disgraces several of his letters."⁴

[*Southey's colloquies.*] "I do well to be angry" seems to be the predominant feeling in his (Southey's) mind."⁴

III. QUOTATIONS FROM SCRIPTURE IN THE FORM OF VERSES, OR PARTS OF VERSES.

From a collection (incomplete) of forty-two such quotations, the following, taken at random, are given:

[*Dante.*] "Surely there is no sword like that which is beaten out of a plough-share."⁵

[*Milton.*] "He that runs may read them" (the traits of Puritan character).⁶

[*Hunt.*] The literature of the Restoration "earthly, sensual, devilish."⁷

[*Southey's colloquies.*] "The bravest and wisest of the Cæsars found their arms and their policy unavailing, when opposed to the weapons that were not carnal, and the kingdom which was not of this world."⁸

[*Hallam.*] "Posterity is not extreme to mark abortive crimes." The quotation here is from the version of which use is made in the Book of Common Prayer.

[*Mackintosh.*] "Political science is in a state of progression.....Faint glimpses of truth begin to appear and shine more and more unto the perfect day."⁹

[*Burleigh.*] Leicester "was the man whom she (Elizabeth) delighted to honor."¹⁰

[*Temple.*] The advocates of Shaftesbury satirized in the following language: "To whitewash an Ethiopian¹¹ by giving him a new coat of blacking, is an enterprise more extraordinary still."

[*Pitt.*] "Pitt (in the estimation of his blind admirers) was not merely a great poet in esse and a great general in posse, but a finished example of moral excellence, the just man made perfect."¹²

¹ Judg. 16:9,12. ² Sam. chs. 15-17. ³ 2 Sam. chs. 2-4. ⁴ Jonah 4:9. ⁵ Joel 3:10. ⁶ Hab. 2:2.
⁷ James 3:15. ⁸ 2 Cor. 10:4; John 18:36. ⁹ Prov. 4:18. ¹⁰ Esther 6:6. ¹¹ Jer 13:23. ¹² Heb. 12:23.

[*Cowley and Milton.*] “There is a law of self-preservation written by God himself on our hearts.¹

[*On civil disabilities of Jews.*] Macaulay here satirizes the position of those who feel bound to insult the Jews because prophecy has uttered some “terrible denunciations” against the race: “How can we excuse ourselves for leaving property to people who are to ‘serve their enemies in hunger, and in thirst, and in want, and in nakedness, and in want of all things;’ for giving protection to the persons of those who are ‘to fear day and night, and to have none assurance of their life;’ for not seizing on the children of a race whose sons and daughters are to be given unto another people?’?”²

[*Cowley and Milton.*] Here is a comparison between the Protectorate of Cromwell and the parable of Jotham. Cowley speaks: “Then were we like the trees of the forest in Holy Writ, given over to the rule of the bramble; then from the bases of the shrubs came forth the fire which devoured the cedars of Lebanon.”³

[*Barere.*] “Whatsoever things are false, whatsoever things are dishonest, whatsoever things are unjust, whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever things are hateful, whatsoever things are of evil report, if there be any vice, and if there be any infamy, all these things were blended in Barere.”⁴

After these copious, though by no means exhaustive, references to the scriptural style of Macaulay, it will not be possible, within the limits of this article, to compress all that these extracts suggest might be said. It surely must be somewhat staggering to our preconceptions, on rising from such a study of Macaulay’s writings, to read those words of Prof. Phelps: “Some religious weakness of the Clapham preachers probably gave to Macaulay’s mind an anti-christian (?) lurch from which he never recovered.” Our presuppositions would infer a life influenced to a large degree by the precepts of that Book which he had “at his fingers’ ends.” May it not be that Prof. Phelps’ words convey a meaning which they were never intended to convey? They are conjectural, and a hypothesis is not always trustworthy. Moreover, that Macaulay’s “mind was anti-christian” we dare to say is not proven. The tone of the “Essays” utters a vehement rebuttal against such an assertion. His mind might have rebounded from a narrow form of “evangelical” piety; from that form of religion which consisted in “having a plain dress, lank hair, no starch in his linen, no gay furniture in his house; in talking through the nose, and showing the whites of the eyes; and in naming one’s children Assurance, Tribulation and Maher-shalal-hash-baz.”⁵ But his spotless life, his twice-shown willingness to resign office rather than support measures which his conscience condemned, his testimony everywhere to the high character of the Christian religion, his exalted estimate of the Scriptures, and his womanly tenderness of character—all disprove the charge that he was “anti-christian.” Our space prevents the insertion of passages from the Essays which show a fine and exalted spirit, sensitive to the indications of divine guidance. And we attribute much of this to his diligent search and use of the Scriptures. The polished darts which he made the Bible to yield for the quiver of the rhetorician, became “arrows in the hand of a mighty man” with which to repel and keep at bay spiritual foes. An article might be written, based upon our study of Macaulay, upon the *Advantages of a Biblical Style*, as affording a perspicuity, a force,

¹ Jer. 31:33. ² Deut. 28:48,66 and 32. ³ Judg. 9:14. ⁴ Phil. 4:8. ⁵ Isa. 8:1, (from “Leigh Hunt.”)

a grace of diction to be obtained in hardly any other way. In the "Fors Clavigera" Ruskin bestows this high praise upon the Scriptures as the rhetorician's vade mecum : " To that discipline (at home in the Bible), patient, accurate, and resolute, I owe, not only a knowledge of the Book . . . but much of my general power of taking pains, and the best part of my taste in literature . . . and, once knowing the Bible, it was not possible for me, in the foolishest times of youth to write entirely superficial and formal English." The acquisition of the art of chaste and clear expression not unnaturally follows the study of the Book of which Macaulay said : " It is a stupendous work, which, if everything else in our language should perish, would alone suffice to show the whole extent of its beauty and power." The advantages of a biblical style are not alone in its outward effects, but in its inward ones upon the mind of the author.

We would leave our subject, then, not with pleasure that we have turned attention to Macaulay's scriptural style as a literary curiosity, but with the hope that what has been said may be weighed especially by those who expect at some future time to wield the mother-tongue dexterously, the students of our colleges and seminaries. We would especially commend a saturation in the English Bible to all young men who have in contemplation the work of the ministry, not only because the Scripture is the sword of the Spirit, but because of its collateral and incidental use for the rhetorician. We would urge, with the classic English of Macaulay before us, the provision of courses of study in the English Bible, particularly in our theological seminaries, graduates from which institutions too often (in all respect be it said) know less of the Bible, than they do *about* it. And we would especially call attention to the emphasis which the selection from Macaulay's Essays accompanying this article, put upon the study of the *Old Testament*. Shall not the idol of non-religious culture fall before the introduction and in some instances the restoration of the Bible to the prescribed courses of college study, in order that the highest ideal of culture, both moral and intellectual, may attract the minds of our youth ?

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE DISCOURSE IN HOSEA 1, 2?

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This question does not admit of a decisive answer. Serious difficulties confront one whenever he comes to the point of deciding the question in either of the ways in which it is possible to answer it. Whatever answer one finally makes he is bound to recognize the difficulties and to allow their full weight. If he does this, he cannot be very dogmatic in expressing his opinion. None the less is it desirable to consider the problem and give as decided an answer as the case admits. There are three possible opinions which, with the chief reasons for holding them are given below.

A. These chapters are historical and give the account of the marriage relative of Hosea into which God commanded him to enter for the purpose of teaching Israel a lesson.